

# The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

*For people caring about New York's trees and forests*

September/October 2016



*Member Profile: Brad and Linda Jones*

*Volume 54 Number 5*



FOUNDED 1963

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VOLUME 54, NUMBER 5

*The New York Forest Owner is a bi-monthly publication of The New York Forest Owners Association, PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. Materials submitted for publication should be sent to: **Mary Beth Malmshheimer**, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035. Materials may also be e-mailed to [mmalmshe@syr.edu](mailto:mmalmshe@syr.edu). Articles, artwork and photos are invited and if requested, are returned after use. **The deadline for submission for the November/December issue is October 1, 2016.***

Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. 1-800-836-3566. Cost of family membership/subscription is \$45.

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**COVER:** Linda Jones at their trout/swimming pond with Micha and Tobi (their very young Labradors who swim about 10 times a day) with their mostly hardwood forest in the background. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of the Jones'.

# From The President

These words are written in the middle of a hot, dry summer. Tasks like cutting next year's firewood, attacking invasive plants, or doing timber stand improvement are best postponed until cooler weather. This is a good time of year to just walk in the forest's shade, sit on a stump, and reflect on our good fortune to live in such a beautiful part of the world.



It is a privilege to get a copy of every chapter's newsletter and read about the events that have been organized. NYFOA members should make every

effort to attend these events which are invariably informative and fun. It is a chance to socialize with fellow woodland owners and find out what they are doing in their woods. When your chapter newsletter arrives, grab your calendar and mark down the dates for the events. Invite new or prospective members – your friends or neighbors – to attend with you.

We have been informed that the DEC is considering a proposal to require pre-notification of harvesting activities on private forestland. We have requested a meeting with the DEC to understand the details of this proposal so that NYFOA can formulate a position representing the interests of our membership. We also plan to discuss the forest tax law and possible changes to that law. Look for additional information in the November issue of the *Forest Owner*.

Earlier this month I sent all NYFOA members a request to write the Governor and our respective state legislators, asking support for one of our most important Restore New York Woodlands proposals. Specifically, we are asking that three million dollars be allocated from the Environmental Protection Fund to provide cost share payments covering stewardship practices on private and public forest lands. Eligible practices would include managing interfering and invasive vegetation and deer exclosure fencing, which are a prerequisite for successful forest regeneration in many cases. Our state's forested landscape provides irreplaceable benefits for society-at-large, and we feel it is entirely justifiable to request public support to ensure that these benefits are available to future generations. Please send the sample letters we have provided before the end of September and consider calling on your legislators in their District Offices before the November elections. We have to make our case before the next budget cycle begins this fall.

Email is an effective and inexpensive way for NYFOA to communicate with its members in a timely fashion. We do not have email addresses for a number of our members. If you have never received an email from us, you are probably one of them. If you would like to receive timely updates from us, send an email to Liana Gooding at [lgooding@nyfoa.org](mailto:lgooding@nyfoa.org) or call 800-836-3566 to give us your email address.

–Charles Stackhouse  
NYFOA President

The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. NYFOA is a not-for-profit group of people who care about NYS's trees and forests and are interested in the thoughtful management of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

**Join!** NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests.

Join NYFOA today and begin to receive its many benefits including: six issues of *The New York Forest Owner*, woodwalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

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# New Member Snapshots

**Phil Race**

**Forest Land:** 200 acres, Livingston County

**Objectives:** Forest Management, Agriculture, Silvopasture, Hunting

Phil purchased his 250-acre property for hunting about thirty years ago. It consists of 200 acres of woodlands and 50 acres of fields. He joined NYFOA earlier this year through a kind gift from member Gary Blough, who came to NYFOA through The Challenge Gift Membership Drive.


Before Phil bought the property, the forest was logged with profit as the primary motivator. This negatively impacted the health and diversity of the remaining trees. His goal over the last thirty years has been to restore and improve the woods and provide good habitat for wildlife through careful forest management, which includes periodic and mindful harvesting.

In the last few years, Phil recognized that the soil on the 50 acres of fields that was being eroded and degraded. He had been leasing it to a farmer who was growing corn and soybeans. The soil was essentially dead. Topsoil was disappearing and not an earthworm could be found. He set his sights on regenerating the land by no longer leasing it to the farmer and planted pasture. Using heritage breeds of cattle, pigs, and pastured chickens along with a method called managed intensive grazing, Phil is working to increase the health of the soil. In the process, he raises healthy animals and therefore produces healthy food which includes grass fed and finished beef, pastured pork and pastured chicken and eggs. Recently, Phil has begun experimenting with silvopasture in a small area of low-quality woods to address some issues with soil compaction and poor regeneration. His overall goal is to improve and regenerate the land and forest by working with nature.



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# NYFOA Silent Auction

EMILY ANDERSON

This year's annual auction is off to a good start. The team has been actively planning the event through phone calls and intensive e-mails. The committee has decided to set a goal of \$5,000 and believes this is attainable. This goal will allow us to make a sizable donation to multiple organizations that promote stewardship of New York State forest lands. Organizations such as the American Chestnut Foundation, Master Forest Owner Program, 4-H, FFA, and envirothon teams will be asked to submit proposals on their intentions for utilizing the funds. The committee will score the proposals and award the money as they see fit.

This winter we will start an online auction for all members to bid on, and there will also be a live silent auction at the annual meeting. We are still looking for donations or members to seek out donations from various sources. Maybe you create beautiful Windsor chairs, birdhouses, and post and beam barns or know a chain saw dealer that is willing to donate. The committee feels that it is our time to step up to the plate and help grow the future of tomorrow.

Please contact the committee with any questions by e-mailing them at: [auction@nyfoa.org](mailto:auction@nyfoa.org). 🌲



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## Welcome New Members

We welcome the following new members (who joined since the publishing of the last issue) to NYFOA and thank them for their interest in, and support of, the organization:

Name	Chapter	Name	Chapter
Mike Arman	WFL	Dorothea & Mike Sanchez	WFL
Harley Davis	AFC	Kristopher Smith	SFL
Marc Franco	CNY	Todd Terwilliger	WFL
Tom Gerow, Wagner Lumber Co.	SFL	Tyler & Brandy Turner	WFL
Mark Howes	WFL	George Woodzell	CDC
Nick Jensen	WFL		

# Ask A Professional

PETER SMALLIDGE



Peter Smallidge

Landowner questions are addressed by foresters and other natural resources professionals. Landowners should be careful when interpreting answers and applying this general advice to their property because landowner objectives and property conditions will influence specific management options. When in doubt, check with your regional DEC office or other service providers. Landowners are also encouraged to be active participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYFOA programs to gain additional, often site-specific, answers to questions. To submit a question, email to Peter Smallidge at [pjs23@cornell.edu](mailto:pjs23@cornell.edu) with an explicit mention of "Ask a Professional." Additional reading on various topics is available at [www.forestconnect.info](http://www.forestconnect.info)

## Red and White Oak

### Question:

What is the difference between red and white oaks? Do deer like them both? (Casey C., NAC)

### Answer:

Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) and white oak (*Q. alba*) occur throughout all of New York, except for portions of the upper elevations in

the Adirondacks. White oak tends to be more restricted to drier soils; northern red oak has a broader tolerance for soil moisture. These species are renowned and enjoyed because of the multitude of virtues that include beauty, timber, food for wildlife, firewood, and their ability to attain massive size (Figure 1). Much has been written about these species, and a good starting point is a google search for "silvics." The best book, of coffee table quality, for the identification of oaks and other New York trees is "Trees of New York State, Native and Naturalized" by Donald J. Leopold.

The oak genus, *Quercus*, is broken into two subgenera, the red and white oaks. This adds a bit to confusion in naming because a tree might be called a "red oak" and be one of several of the species of the subgenus *Erythrobalanus* (as compared to the white oak subgenus *Leucobalanus*). In practice, most people don't refer to the subgenus and rather intend to refer to a particular species of red and white oak. There are more than a dozen oak species that occur in New York. The subgenus distinction has value because in addition to the botanical features that identify the genus, there are features that are specific to the subgenera.

The oak genus is characterized by acorns as a fruit, leaves that typically



Figure 2A. The bark of a six inch diameter northern red oak has started to develop the tell-tale smooth ridges.

have prominent lobes and sinuses, and a cluster of buds at the end of the twig. When the twig is cleanly cut in cross-section the pith may have a shape that resembles a "star." The features of acorns that are used to differentiate the oaks include the length of the stalk (peduncle), the length of the acorn, the extent of the acorn covered by the acorn cap, and the texture of the acorn



Figure 1. This white oak is more than 60 inches in diameter and likely dates to before the time when the founders debated the principles of government for the United States.



Figure 2B. The bark of a 10 inch diameter northern red oak has developed smooth ridges that extend well up into the lower portions of the crown.



Figure 3. The leaves of northern red oak have bristle tips as do all members of the red oak subgenus. The typical leaf shape has moderately sized lobes and sinuses, with the sinuses extending approximately half way to the midrib. The shape, though, varies depending on the amount of shading, tree vigor, and on seedlings versus mature trees.

cap. Oaks will tend to drop some immature acorns by mid-summer, but the features of these don't usually allow for easy identification of the species.

### The Red Oak Subgenus

The red oak subgenus has all the features of the genus plus the trees

tend to have dark gray to blackish-gray bark, the lobes of the leaves are tipped with a bristle, and the buds are pointed. The bark of the subgenus can vary from a ridge and valley pattern to coarsely blocky. The acorns mature over two growing seasons, which allows some prediction of the acorn crop that will occur in the following growing season.

The bark of northern red oak has the general form of "ridge and furrow", but the furrows are shallow and the thin ridges are relatively long, unbroken and smooth (Figure 2A and B). Students of tree identification may learn to recognize those long smooth ridges as resembling ski tracks in fresh snow. Northern red oak leaves have sinuses that extend approximately halfway to the midrib, moderately rounded sinuses, and the bristle tipped lobes characteristic of its subgenus (Figure 3). The buds of northern red oak are brown, pointed and either free of any fine delicate hairs (pubescence), or only having hairs on the edges of scales on the upper half of the bud (Figure 4). Bud size varies with the vigor of the tree, but the buds are usually larger than those of white oak.

Northern red oak, as for the red oak subgenus, have acorns that require two years to develop (Figure 5). Northern red oak typically has a relatively shallow cap covering approximately one-quarter of the acorn's length and the cap's smooth surface. The acorn is about 1" long. The stalk is short or absent.

*continued on page 18*



Figure 4. The buds of northern red oak are uniformly brown, and may be mostly smooth (as pictured) or with hairs on the edges of scales on the half of the bud. Buds are pointed relative to the white oaks.



Figure 5. Northern red oak acorns require two growing seasons to mature. Binoculars can be used to predict the abundance of acorns the following year. White oak acorns (not pictured) mature in the growing season that they form.

# Wild Things in Your Woodlands

CORY SNYDER

## NORTHERN GOSHAWK (*ACCIPITER GENTILIS*)



*The northern goshawk is a medium- to large-sized raptor. Adult goshawks most often have a blue-grey back and a grey and white barring pattern on the underside. Juveniles have brown coloration in place of grey on both the top and in the barring patterns. Both juveniles and adults have either black or dark bars on their tails as well. Juveniles begin life with yellow eyes that darken towards a deeper red color after their second year. Along with the change in eye color, adults have a white eye bar that looks just like a set of eye brows. Goshawks are the largest of the Accipiter genus with females being significantly larger than males. Males can range up to 22 inches long, weigh up to 2.6 pounds and have a 41-inch wingspan. The larger females can reach up to 27 inches long, weigh 4.85 pounds, and have a 50-inch wingspan! The northern goshawk can also reach flying speeds up to 38 mph (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waNQmNF6Sgs> for an amazing video)!*

**P**erched high upon the last branch of a magnificent red oak sits the northern goshawk. The goshawk makes its home in mature forests. They can be found in old growth stands of both deciduous and coniferous forests. They prefer areas with a mostly closed tree canopy (around 60 percent). With their range spreading across all of New York State, the northern goshawk can survive at altitudes from sea level to the alpine regions of the Adirondacks. In the northeast US, the northern goshawk can be found nearly everywhere from Pennsylvania

north all the way up to the arctic with some populations stretching down the Rockies into Mexico. Although fairly widespread, sightings of the goshawk are not common as the birds are often found in hard to reach areas.

The habitat occupied by this species plays to its strengths. The goshawk is both an agile flyer and a voracious predator. It feeds mainly on smaller bird species, small reptiles, and small mammals. It uses its daredevil like acrobatic abilities to swoop in and out of, through, between, and around all obstacles in the forests it calls home. The northern goshawk can also plow

strait through thick brush or even dive into water in pursuit of its prey. Once its meal has been captured, the goshawk has been known to store its prey in the crook of a tree before consumption.


When breeding season approaches the goshawk has several unique and interesting behaviors. Before laying eggs the birds will perform a flying courtship dance consisting of the male swooping down at the female from high above. Once the partner is chosen a clutch of up to 5 eggs is laid in a large nest. Goshawks make a nest up to 4 feet long, 2 feet wide,



and 2 feet deep. Nests are typically built on the largest available tree in the area. A pair of goshawks may build and maintain up to 8 nests in any given area, choosing to either nest in the same site the next year or shift to an alternative nest for reasons like a failed brood in the previous nest. While nesting, goshawk parents fiercely protect their young. They will kill other raptors and owls they perceive as a threat and may even attack a wandering human who strolls too close to the nesting site. Nesting occurs in the spring, typically in the months of April and May.

In September and October, northern goshawks are one of many raptor species that take part in a great southern migration. Thousands of hawks including northern goshawks, red-tailed hawks, broad-shouldered-winged hawks, and other species fly along ridgelines catching the thermal winds off the faces of the slopes and gliding to conserve energy. Although the northern goshawk does not migrate nearly as far as other species, individuals from the colder northern

reaches of the range move toward the southern portions of the range, while individuals nesting in the southern portion of the range may just move to lower altitudes for winter.

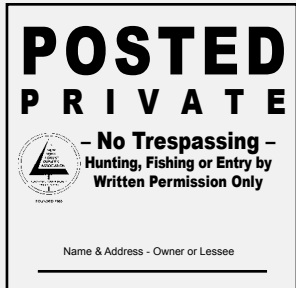
Although northern goshawks are listed as a least concern species they are at some risk. They are listed by the US Forest Service as sensitive species due to their preference for large areas of mature forests. Because goshawks favor large tracts of mature forests, they are highly susceptible to activities that remove forests permanently or break forests up into smaller pieces. Habitat fragmentation, disturbance, and removal of suitable nesting trees can heavily affect goshawks. Maintaining large, intact forests within the landscape will help goshawks succeed. 

*Cory Snyder is a senior majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Science at Cornell University.*

*Is there a certain animal that you would like to see featured in an upcoming "Wild Things" column? If so, email Kristi Sullivan at kls20@cornell.edu*

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# Planting Trees for Streams

SARAH WALSH

As forest owners know, trees provide lots of benefits, but trees along streams do even more. Trees shade waters, cooling them and providing habitat for native trout,

which rely on cool water to survive. In the fall, trees drop their leaves into the stream, providing an important food source for macroinvertebrates, or aquatic insects. These little critters not



Site before “Trees for Tribs” planting.



Site after “Trees for Tribs” planting. Trees and shrubs along with changes in maintenance have allowed for plant establishment as well as natural regeneration to occur along this stream.

only eat leaves, but can also process phosphorus and other nutrients that run off the land, purifying the water, improving water quality, and providing food for the fish living in the streams. Overall, trees near streams make a healthy ecosystem.

This is why the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s (DEC) has initiated the “Trees for Tribs” program. Since 2007, the “Trees for Tribs” program has worked to plant trees and shrubs along tributaries throughout the state, working directly with interested landowners, conservation organizations, and municipalities.

Tributaries are small creeks and streams, which flow into and feed larger rivers and lakes. The goal of the program is to plant young trees and shrubs along stream corridors, also known as riparian areas, in order to prevent erosion, increase flood water retention, improve wildlife and stream habitat, as well as to improve water quality. By planting trees, a buffer is created between the in-use land and the water, creating an area for soils and pollutants to be collected and filtered before entering the tributary.

During 2016, “Trees for Tribs” had a banner year, planting more than 25,000 trees and shrubs in more than six watersheds across New York State. DEC coordinators in Lake Champlain, Mohawk River, Hudson Estuary, Croton, Lower Genesee and Chesapeake watersheds have planted more than 90,000 plants in nine years. Program sites include schools, municipalities, parks, commercial sites, private lands and land trust properties.

“Trees for Tribs” is a program designed for those landowners who may not be eligible for other state and federal programs that incentivize planting of riparian areas. The program works with landowners, big and small, to provide technical assistance for planting and maintenance, and to ensure successful streamside planting projects. It also provides tree shelters and weed mats. Tree shelters protect young seedlings from browsing by deer



*“Trees for Tribs” works with volunteers to plant trees and shrubs along streams.*



*The program provides free technical assistance as well as tree shelters and weed mats to interested landowners.*

and vermin. Weed mats give young trees and shrubs space to establish without competition from grasses and weeds.

All trees, shrubs, weed mats and tree shelters are provided to landowners at low to no-cost, making tree planting easy. “Trees for Tribs” is able to do this work due to its close affiliation with the New York State Tree Nursery at Saratoga. Nursery staff raise bareroot stock using seeds from the state, growing hearty, native plants

specific for riparian areas and adjacent uplands. Landowners can also purchase seedling trees and shrubs from the nursery during their annual Spring Seedling Sale.


Private landowners make up a majority of “Trees for Tribs” projects, planting for a variety of goals including stabilizing streambanks, improving trout and wildlife habitat, improving pollinator habitat, increasing flood retention and reducing impacts from adjacent land runoff. Landowners

commit to maintaining trees; straightening tubes, removing tubes from mature trees and watering trees in drought conditions. Additionally, landowners commit to maintaining the forested stream in perpetuity, protecting the trees from being removed in the future.

Landowners interested in “Trees for Tribs” can fill out the program application and submit it for consideration. Six program coordinators exist across the state and can provide landowners with input and feedback on what species work best for your riparian, or streamside, area.

Landowners can also purchase their own trees and shrubs through the New York State Tree Nursery in Saratoga, beginning in January each year.

To learn more about “Trees for Tribs” or to apply for this program, please visit DEC’s website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/77710.html>.

To learn more about the public annual Spring Seedling Sale through the State Tree Nursery in Saratoga, visit the nursery website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7127.html>. 



*“Trees for Tribs” has been working with private landowners and conservation groups for nearly ten years to replant New York’s streams, including sites like these in the Adirondacks.*

*Sarah Walsh is the Trees for Tributaries Coordinator, Division of Lands and Forests, NYS DEC.*

# Rehabilitating Browsed Hardwood Seedlings

JERRY MICHAEL

Due to a half-century of excessive deer populations, seedlings and saplings of desirable hardwood tree species are absent from most New York woodlands. In some stands, natural disturbance or active management has produced a nice crop of desirable regeneration, but the seedlings have been continuously browsed by deer and will never produce a sawlog, maple sap, or even firewood. This article will share some ideas about rehabilitating browsed seedlings to increase their potential future value, but assumes you plan to protect the new growth with deer exclosure fencing or tree shelters until the seedlings have grown out of the reach of deer.

I eliminated weeviled white pine, diseased American beech and hay-

scented fern from my Broome County woodlot about ten years ago. That, plus subsequent removal of cull soft maples for firewood provided enough sunlight to gradually carpet the forest floor with red and white oak, black cherry and sugar maple seedlings — which were repeatedly browsed by deer.

I think it is generally accepted that, when the ecosystem is as out of balance as it is today, a very small population of deer can destroy any regeneration of desirable tree species that is not protected by exclosure fencing, dense logging slash or tree shelters. In the September 2014 issue of *The New York Forest Owner* I provided information on the construction of a low-cost deer exclosure fence that has worked very well in my woodlot. I have erected



Figure 1. Oak and Cherry saplings protected by deer exclosure fence.



Figure 2. Oak seedling pruned in March with new sprouts browsed by deer in May.

three of them so far and the oak and black cherry saplings within the first one, constructed in 2009, are now up to 15 feet tall. (Figure 1).

In the 2014 article I suggested pruning browsed seedlings much as you would prune a rose bush in winter. Subsequent experimentation has persuaded me that resprouting is more successful, and the regrowth more vigorous when you just cut the seedling off at ground level, particularly with oak, black cherry and maple, which are prolific stump-sprouters.

I also wanted to determine if there was any difference in the rate of success between pruning in the fall versus pruning in the early spring. In the fall of 2014 I selected and flagged 100 browsed red oak seedlings; 50 of them within one of my deer exclosure fences and 50 outside the fence. I cut the 50 inside the exclosure at ground level in late October and the 50 outside the exclosure in March 2015. The diameter of the pruned seedlings at ground level ranged from 3/8 to 5/8 inches.



Figure 3. Pruned seedling protected with a tree tube produced a six foot resprout in three months.

By the end of May, 45 of the seedlings pruned the previous October had resprouted to an average height of 9.5" and 48 of those pruned in March had resprouted to an average height of 12". By the following October, the seedlings pruned the previous October averaged 25" in height, while those pruned in March averaged 27" in height. Unsurprisingly, new growth on 31 of the 50 pruned seedlings located outside the fence had already been browsed and developed multiple leaders. Figure 2 is a flagged seedling that was pruned in March and produced two sprouts that were browsed by the end of May.

Although the sample size was limited, I don't think the small differences in sprouting success or first-year growth between fall and spring pruning is significant. From a practical standpoint, fall pruning is much faster because it is easier to identify the desirable seedlings you want to rehabilitate while they still bear leaves. Just don't attempt it while the leaves are green or you may induce late resprouting that will not survive the following winter.

I should note that my small-scale project involved the selection of individually browsed seedlings and pruning with a hand shear or a lopper. For large areas, where the advance regeneration is predominately desirable species, it would probably be more practical to mow the entire understory close to the ground, using power equipment appropriate for the situation. Given sufficient sunlight, and having well-established root systems, the desirable resprouts should be able to outgrow current or subsequently introduced competition. Also, since individual seedling species identification is unnecessary with this approach, it can be done in March as readily as in November. To reiterate, resprouting will be more successful if pruning is completed before trees start moving sap in the spring.

As stated in the 2014 article, tree shelters are not a practical or economically feasible solution for wide-area forest regeneration. However, I have found them useful in establishing a few desirable trees within corridors between deer exclosure fences. Figure 3 is a red oak resprout from a 1" diameter browsed seedling that was pruned at ground level in March 2016 and protected with a 5' tree shelter. The resprout grew more than 6' tall by the middle of July, possibly encouraged by the "greenhouse" effect of the tree shelter. It is already out of the reach of deer, and the shelter can be removed and reused as soon as the new sapling can support itself.

The presence of browsed advance regeneration in your woodlot probably means that the sunlight conditions are favorable and that interfering vegetation is not a serious problem. So, if you are ready to deal with the deer issue, you can accelerate the establishment of your next forest, and increase its ultimate economic value, by rehabilitating growing stock deformed by deer browsing. 🌲

*Jerry Michael serves on the NYFOA board of directors and is chair of the Restore New York Woodlands initiative. He has been an active Master Forest Owner Volunteer with Cornell Cooperative Extension for 21 years.*

**Wanted: Landowners for Member Profiles!** As many of you know, we include a member landowner profile in each issue of the *Forest Owner* magazine. The next several issues of the *Forest Owner*, will be highlighting various aspects of forest regeneration or restoration. Do you have any experiences related to your efforts, successes, or failures with forest regeneration? If so, we would love to hear from you. If interested, please visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OwnerProfile> and we will be in touch. The time commitment is only about 30 minutes for the interview.

Even if you don't have any stories to tell about regeneration we are still interested in hearing from you. Feel free to contact us with comments, questions, and/or feedback about the magazine. Suggestions for article topics are also always welcome. Thanks.

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# Woodland Health

*A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands*

COORDINATED BY MARK WHITMORE

## DRAMATIC NEEDLE BROWNING AND CANOPY DIE-BACK OF EASTERN WHITE PINE (*PINUS STROBUS*)

BY NICHOLAS J. BRAZEE, PH.D.

During the spring of 2016, a dramatic decline of eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) has been observed throughout portions of New England and New York State. Needles of mature trees became straw-colored to brown before they prematurely shed from the canopy. In some cases, only a few main branches were symptomatic while for other trees, the entire canopy exhibited the symptoms (Figure 1). One feature of the decline is that despite significant needle browning and premature shedding in the canopy, the current

season's needles developed normally and appeared healthy. However, as the growing season has progressed, even these needles have become symptomatic on some trees. Based on observations from arborists, landscapers and homeowners made to the UMass Plant Diagnostic Laboratory (UMPDL), white pine decline seems to be especially severe in southeastern New Hampshire, eastern Massachusetts and eastern Connecticut. The cause of this dramatic decline event is not fully understood, as there are several interacting stresses that must accounted

for. At present, pathologists and forest ecologists in the region suspect some type of winter injury was at least partly responsible for this dramatic and widespread decline event. In addition, needle blight and trunk and branch cankering pathogens are also contributing to white pine decline and mortality.

Recent studies have identified several fungal pathogens that are responsible for white pine needle blight in New England (Broders *et al.* 2015, Wyka and Broders 2016). Four needle blight fungi in particular have been recognized as the principal pathogens associated with white pine needle blight in the region (Wyka *et al.* 2016) and include:

1. *Lecanosticta acicola* (formerly *Mycosphaerella dearnessii*)
2. *Lophophacidium dooksii* (formerly *Canavirgella banfieldii*)
3. *Bifusella linearis*
4. *Septorioides strobi*

Based on samples submitted to the UMPDL, three of these fungi have been regularly found on white pines with symptoms of needle blight (*Lophophacidium* has been uncommon to date). Further research now suggests there is a strong link between climate change and the increase in damage from needle blight pathogens of white pine. Using regional weather data, Wyka *et al.* (2016) determined that an increase in precipitation during the months of May, June and July — the time period when white pine needles are elongating — is positively correlated with needle blight injury. However, as is the case with many conifer needle pathogens, that effect has a one year delay. For example, above-average precipitation between May–July in 2013 correlated to higher disease incidence in 2014.

Therefore, we must review the previous growing season to gain insights on what is happening this year. During the spring of 2015, May was extremely dry with above-



Figure 1. Developing candles (branchlets) with clusters of male cones were abundant on symptomatic white pines earlier this growing season while older needles became brown and were prematurely shed.

*continued on page 16*



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## Woodland Health (continued)

average temperatures. Below-average precipitation was also recorded from July through September in the areas where white pine decline appears to be the most severe. In contrast, June of 2015 was very wet in portions of the northeast and there were multiple rainstorms with accumulations >0.75 inches. Heavy rainfall promotes sporulation and disperses significant volumes of fungal spores through splashing and running water. Despite the above-average rainfall in June, the rest of the growing season was dry and many trees may have entered the dormant period suffering from drought stress.

Beginning in July of 2015, the UMPDL began to receive white pine samples with an uncharacteristic symptom: blighted tips on current season's needles. Symptoms of infection from needle blight typically develop on older needles while the current season's needles appear green and healthy. The condition was reported from West Virginia to Maine but affected trees were scattered on the landscape and in many cases were directly adjacent to healthy trees. On a majority of the samples, an unknown fungal pathogen was present that was later identified as *Septorioidea strobi*. While this species was only

recently described it has been found to be associated with white pine needle blight throughout northeastern North America (Wyka and Broders 2016, Wyka *et al.* 2016). Most often, needle tips were straw-colored to brown while the base of the needle remained green and healthy. As we entered the last months of the 2015 calendar year, temperatures throughout the region were above-average, especially in December. These warm, late season temperatures may have hindered the ability of white pines to acclimate for cold winter temperatures. Drought stress is also known to adversely affect a tree's ability to acclimate for winter weather. Once conditions became more seasonable in January and February, freeze injury may have been inflicted.

Another contributor to the current decline of white pine is trunk and branch cankering caused by the fungal pathogen *Caliciopsis pinea*. While *Caliciopsis* is a native pathogen, it has increasingly become an important component of white pine decline and mortality. A survey of *Caliciopsis* incidence in forest stands determined the fungus is widespread throughout New England (Munck *et al.* 2015). Young trees in the suppressed and intermediate crown classes were more

likely to be infected compared to older trees in the codominant and dominant crown classes (Munck *et al.* 2015). The primary symptom of infection is profuse resin flow (pitching, resinosis) on the main trunk, which can be difficult to identify on tall, mature trees with rough bark scales. *Caliciopsis* produces a dense cluster of small, black-colored spore-bearing structures that rupture through the bark (known as "eyelashes") that can aid in diagnosis of the disease. Increasing stem densities in maturing white pine stands has likely facilitated disease development and spread in the region over the past two decades. Similar to white pine needle blight, frequent and heavy rainfall early in the growing season promotes spore production, dispersal and infection.

White pine requires full sun to thrive and when stand densities are high, live crown ratios decrease and trees lose vigor. Weakened trees are more susceptible to attack from opportunistic pests and pathogens (e.g. turpentine beetles, root disease fungi, among many others). Thinning stands to remove weak trees and increase sunlight for residual trees can improve vigor and natural defenses. To summarize, the current decline of eastern white pine is not fully understood and will require more time to better understand. However, the following factors should be considered in the decline:

1. Multiple needle blight pathogens that may or may not co-occur on the same tree.
2. Increased precipitation in the months of May, June and July that would promote needle blight infections on developing white pine needles.
3. Environmental stress such as drought and winter injury.
4. Trunk and branch cankering caused by *Caliciopsis pinea*.
5. High stand densities that lead a decrease in live crown ratios and reduced vigor. 🌲

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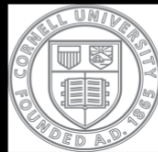
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Mark Whitmore is a forest entomologist in the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the chair of the NY Forest Health Advisory Council.

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Figure 6. White oak leaves lack a bristle tip on the sinus and are described as rounded. The sinus may be deep and extend more than half way to the midrib. This picture illustrates deeper than normal sinuses and late summer leaves that have been enjoyed by some insects.



Figure 7. White oak bark is ashy gray and platey, although the bark may vary on a tree.

### The White Oak Subgenus

The white oak subgenus is characterized by bark that varies considerably from plates to coarsely blocked and textured, but typically is ashy gray in color. The lobes of the leaf lack the bristle tip of the red oak subgenus, and the buds are rounded.

White oak leaves have moderately deep sinuses and moderately wide lobes (Figure 6). The bark of white oak is ashy gray. While the bark often has plates, the pattern of the bark varies considerably on any one tree (Figure 7). White oak is thought by some to have the greatest variation of bark on a tree. The buds of white oak are small compared to northern red oak, smooth, brown and rounded (Figure 8). White oak acorns are slightly smaller than northern red oak at approximately 0.75 inches and the cap also covers approximately one-quarter of its length. The cap scales give a warty appearance.

### Oaks, Acorns and Wildlife

The value of red or white oak acorns to wildlife can't be overstated. These fruits are used by countless mammals, birds and insects. Oaks have peak years of acorn production, known as "mast years" that may litter the forest floor. A mast year may occur for oaks on one ridge, but not on an adjacent ridge, or in one section of the state and not in another. Some individual trees may not fruit while neighboring trees have an abundant crop of acorns.

The cycle for mast years in white oak may vary from 4 to 10 years and is often associated with specific weather conditions that coincide with flowering. White oak acorns mature the year they form and will germinate that fall by growing the root (called the radical) into the soil. The cycle for mast years of northern red oak varies from 2 to 5 years. The animals that enjoy acorns may consume or damage more than 80% of acorns in mast years and all in poor seed years. The meat of white oak acorns is described as

"sweet", but anyone tasting the meat of both species would describe them as bitter. An inspection of the forest floor in the spring rarely if ever yields an acorn with meat; something consumes essentially all of the acorns that don't germinate.

Deer not only eat the acorns, but also browse the tips of seedlings. Repeated browsing of seedling tips results in stunted plants that are not able to grow in height. Excessive browsing can kill the seedlings. Seedlings that have been browsed for several years attain a growth form that resembles a bonsai tree. While there may be some aesthetic appeal to a bonsai oak, the woodland owner trying to grow single-stemmed and straight oaks for timber will be frustrated. Similarly, the stunted trees will become overtopped by neighboring trees and fail to attain a level of vigor that allows for future acorn production. ▲

*Dr. Peter Smallidge, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University Cooperative Extension. Director, Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, Ithaca, NY, 14853. Support for ForestConnect is provided by USDA NIFA and the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.*



Figure 8. White oak buds are smooth, brown, and rounded.

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# Member Profile:

## *Brad and Linda Jones*

BRIANA BINKERD-DALE

Brad and Linda Jones live on 129 acres in the Town of Italy, NY in Yates County. Linda was born on Long Island and grew up in the Albany area. After obtaining degrees from SUNY Brockport and American University, she worked for 30 years in human resources at Eastman Kodak, followed by six years at Constellation Brands as Director of Training and Development. After spending two years as a crop owner at Wegmans Organic Farm she is now a licensed real estate salesperson with Nothnagle Realtors in Naples and Canandaigua. Brad was born and raised in the Rochester area and has science degrees from the University of Toronto with an MBA from RIT. He worked at Kodak for 29 years followed by stints at Alstom North America and the Al Sigt Center in executive positions. Brad has also taught at the Finger Lakes Community College and served on the town board and planning board. He currently continues to offer consulting services to local clients on issues of organizational competitiveness, while shifting more of his time and energy to the property (and then there is golf). Linda and Brad have three children and seven grandchildren, along with two Labradors, Micha and Tobi.

Brad's father purchased the first parcel of 107 acres in 1958 and added two others in

the early 1960s. At that time the property had no utility services and staying there was indeed spartan; "Our first project in 1958 was to build a new outhouse so that Mom would agree to visit," Brad laughed. In 1986, following his father's passing, Brad and his three siblings built a small log cabin, complete with electricity and plumbing, which was finished in 1989. Brad's parents had begun to deed the property to their four children in the 1970s: each of them had quarter shares of the 175 acres. After the death of his older brother in 1997, Brad and Linda purchased his share from Brad's sister-in-law. About the same time they also purchased the younger brother's share and deeded over 45 acres to his sister for her homestead. In 2004, Linda and Brad faced a tough question: they were no longer able to maintain the 129 acres and the "retirement home" they had built on the Genesee River — which one to sell? They finally decided to move to the family farm and embarked on a 12 month project to expand the original log home to accommodate their ever growing family. They have no desire to ever move again.

The property is generally flat, except for a deep ravine on the southern property line (Conklin Gorge), with three streams



*Brad in the equipment storage section of the Morton building with some of their helpers.*

and three ponds. The elevation is just under 1,800 feet above sea level, and all of the view sheds are unspoiled. It is located at the end of a dirt road, with Brad's sister's parcel bordering it on the north side. To the south and west it borders state property (the Hi Tor Multiple Use Area) with thousands of acres of recreational land and many miles of the Finger Lakes Trail. Their forest consists of 20 acres of softwood planted in the early 1960s and 80 acres of hardwoods that has been under active management since 1959. The remaining acres are chemical-free hay fields that are managed by Brad and Linda and harvested by their nearest neighbor for his beef cattle.

They have had three modest hardwood harvests and are planning for another selection cut in 2018. In the more mature hardwoods red oak is dominant followed by ash, maple, and white pine. There is also a fair amount of hickory, quaking aspen, basswood, and some white oak. The understory is pretty diverse, as the forest regenerates well. Brad credits that to dedicated implementation of their timber stand improvement (TSI) plan, noting that the unmanaged state land that borders them has much greater issues with forest regeneration and invasive plant species. Along the forest edges there is some ironwood which they cut back each year, as it makes excellent firewood. An original 20 acre pasture has reverted to forest. While partially planted with Scotch pine and larch, it is now primarily sugar



*View of the upper chemical-free hay fields with hardwoods in the background.*

*continued on page 22*

maple with some ash and red oak moving in. The original hardwoods, after three light harvests and untold hours of TSI, are much more beautiful and productive than they were. Their orchard (mostly heritage apples), lavender bed, vegetable gardens, and extensive flower gardens have all been started in the last 15 years. Linda utilizes occasional part-time help for her flowers, and had her first lavender harvest this July; she plans to dry bouquets from her harvest, as well as distilling essential oil.

One of the ponds on the property was dug for trout in 1964 and was initially 18 feet deep. Brad's father stopped putting trout in after a few years and switched over to bass and blue gills, which overpopulated over time. In 2001, Brad and Linda had the pond re-dug to 20 feet to get rid of the accumulated sedimentation, and started stocking it with rainbow and brook trout. Now, Brad said proudly, "the neighborhood kids have dubbed it the best swimming pond in the world, and there's not a blade of grass in it." There are about 100 each of rainbow and brook trout. The current batch is maturing now and will take about 3 years — the last batch got wiped out by blue herons, but that issue has been resolved now that Brad and the dogs are on the property full time. They get new fingerlings (about 50 per year) from Finger Lakes Aquaculture, which Brad describes as an amazing and quality resource. The owner retired from the DEC, and carries about 20 different species of fish and crustaceans.

Brad and Linda have a forest management plan that was prepared by Future Forest Consulting and reviewed by their DEC



*Mature red oak after 65 years of TSI.*

Forester, Brice June. Brad had known Cory Figueiredo at Future Forest Consulting for a while, felt very comfortable working with them and is quite pleased with the work they have accomplished. In 1960 and 1961 the Jones family planted 20 acres of softwoods (larch, scotch pine, red pine, and white spruce), much of which underwent a commercial thinning in 2008. For the three commercial hardwood cuts that have taken place so far (about 200 trees each time, not value cuts), a DEC forester marked and inventoried the trees to be cut and put the harvest out to bid to their list of qualified foresters. Each time, Brad and Linda went with people who were fairly local; for their 2018 harvest they will continue to stay with local loggers.

At this point, most of the major projects are complete and Brad and Linda are in an annual maintenance/production mode. They do have some access trail, culvert, and drainage tile work that will be done this year or next. "Ongoing management of fields, forest, and access roads all support our enjoyment of the property," Brad said. "Just living here is recreational, with all of the peace and quiet and natural beauty." They also hike, ski, and snowshoe with Micha and Tobi leading the way. Family and friends visit often and have a great time. The grandchildren all live in more developed areas and love coming to a place with wide open spaces and few restrictions. They have friends who hunt on the land — Brad and Linda used to hunt, but are almost too busy to now. Brad will be training Micha and Tobi under the gun this fall, and will take them out grouse hunting — they are excellent grouse dogs.

In the fall, Brad's recreation is mostly processing firewood. Last year they harvested and processed about 35 face cords and will harvest more beginning next month; due to the warm winter last year he kept processing up until late December, and already has about half of what he needs for the coming winter. "Harvesting the firewood is continuous timber stand improvement, just taking out the poorer trees," Brad said. "Trees that grow on any edge of the forest are not good lumber — 75% of wood cut last year was red oak with epicormic branching; it had no value except for firewood, and red oak burns really well." Over the last 15 years they have acquired most of the tools and equipment that they need: John Deere 5015 diesel loader/tractor, 1949 Ford 8N tractor, flail mower, wood splitter, bush hog, plow,



*Linda with an old growth white oak that dates back several hundred years.*

harrow, back blade, York rake, Stihl chain saws, and a supporting cast of tools. Brad and Linda work with friends and neighbors on many projects and share equipment and tools as needed, hiring local help for forest planning, commercial thinning, and a small amount of the TSI. They also hire a young neighbor to help with firewood processing. A portion of the timber sale revenue is paid to local tax jurisdictions.

Brad's father joined NYFOA decades ago, and Brad has kept his membership going. "NYFOA provides us with a steady stream of useful information and keeps us in touch with many other forest owners across the state," Brad said. His advice to other forest owners includes: "Regardless of the size of your forest, get some professional advice and a written forest management plan. And when you select tools and equipment, make sure that it is high quality and reliable. Farms and forests are not meant for homeowner-grade products. And lastly, if you want a beautiful, healthy, and productive pond, dig it steep and deep." His favorite things about being a forest owner are: "The amazing grace and beauty every day of the year, always finding something new and interesting there, and an endless supply of high quality firewood. Doing work in the forest is one of the healthiest things you can do." 🌲

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# The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Syracuse, N.Y.  
Permit No. 999



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